

Congresswoman NYDIA M. VELÁZQUEZ

Representing New York's 12th Congressional District
Ranking Democratic Member, House Small Business Committee



Velázquez Bill Helps Welfare Families

Proposal would keep parents with children from being thrown off rolls

Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez last month introduced legislation to reform the welfare laws that are now beginning to eliminate families from City welfare rolls, right in the aftermath of September 11, a deepening recession, and major job losses.

The 1996 Welfare Reform Act mandated that families could receive federal assistance for no more than five years in their lifetime. It also revoked the rights of legal immigrants to receive welfare, though their taxes support it.

December 1, 2001 was the five-year deadline that dropped 38,000 New York families from welfare.

The "Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Recipients Lifeline Act" would repeal the five-year limit on benefits, repeal restrictions on legal immigrants, require bilingual services and adjust aid for inflation.

"We cannot leave families with so little help at this time," Congresswoman Velázquez said. "We must act now."



Congresswoman Velázquez held a rally with FUREE and Make the Road By Walking to introduce her welfare reform bill with families facing the end of their benefits.

Airbus 300 Safety Hearing Requested

Flt. 587 crash poses questions about reliability of airliner

In a letter to the House Committee on Transportation, Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez requested a hearing into the safety of the Airbus 300 and the crash of American Airlines Flight 587.

American Airlines Flight 587 crashed shortly after takeoff from New York's Kennedy Airport and plunged into the Rockaway section of Queens. All 260 people aboard the flight, which was bound for Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic, perished. Many of them were constituents of the districts represented by Congresswoman Velázquez.

The Airbus 300 has a history of problems, particularly with the rudder. Over the past 20 years, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has issued more than 600 "airworthiness" directives pertaining to various Airbus models. In both 1990 and 1997, the FAA ordered inspections of the Airbus rudder to detect problems. And just two months ago, Peruvian aviation officials asked the National Transportation Safety Board to review information from the flight data and voice recorders of an Airbus

300 departing Lima, Peru, that experienced erratic rudder movements and excessive vibrations.

In the letter, Velázquez writes, "surely the unusual circumstances surrounding the crash of Flight 587 and 20 years of serious safety complaints merit a thorough investigation into the Airbus 300 and its safety record." The letter goes on to say that Congresswoman Velázquez "believes a hearing is necessary, not only to restore confidence in an already apprehensive public, but to ensure no future loss of lives."

FedEx and American Airlines are the only U.S. air carriers that use the Airbus 300. The aircraft is built by a firm based in France. American Airlines has 34 in its fleet and only uses them for flights between the northeastern U.S. and several countries in the Caribbean.

Congresswoman Velázquez hopes to get a prompt response from the Committee on Transportation regarding a hearing into the Airbus 300 safety record and the crash of Flight 587 that took the lives of so many who lived in their congressional districts.

Major Education Bill Now Law

Provides more resources, requires more school accountability

President Bush signed into law the biggest changes in federal education policy in 40 years last month, requiring more accountability while providing more resources for public school to teach our young people.

The new law includes an amendment by Congresswoman Nydia M. Velázquez to allow schools to use “in-kind” donations of time and materials to qualify for after-school program federal matching funds.

The new law requires yearly testing in reading and math for every child in grade 3-8 beginning in 2005, with the goal of improving all students’ reading and math skills within 12 years and narrowing the performance gap between wealthy and low-income schools.

The law also requires schools to certify their teachers are qualified in their subject areas. If test scores do not improve, low-income students can transfer to other schools or receive tutoring.

Finally, the law lets Congress spend \$26.5 billion on public education and increases spending for the main program helping low-income schoolchildren.

“Everyone knows education is important for our



Congresswoman Velázquez meets with schoolchildren during a visit to P.S. 145 last month.

children,” Congresswoman Velázquez said. “These new changes will help all students to achieve their potential.”

Velázquez Introduces Federal Retiree Law

Indexes savings for inflation, allows widowed spouses to get benefits

Last month Congresswoman Velázquez introduced a bill to reform parts of the federal employees retirement system.

The “Deferred Annuitant Fairness Act” would index for inflation money put away by government workers for their retirement, so it holds its value when they become eligible for the benefit at age 62. It would also require that the spouses of federal workers who die before reaching retirement are allowed to receive the benefit

themselves.

Currently, funds put away for retirement are not indexed for inflation. That means \$1,000 put away today will remain \$1,000 30 years from now, except that inflation has decreased its value three decades later, when it will be worth about \$400. That discourages workers from keeping money in the system, and punishes those who do.

Also, under the old Civil Service Retirement System, spouses of federal workers who die before retirement age cannot receive the benefit. Congresswoman



Velázquez’s bill would change that, allowing the widowed spouse to collect the worker’s retirement benefit.

“It is important to treat everyone fairly,” Congresswoman Velázquez said.

Grants Awarded to Our Community

Beth Jacob Parochial School.....\$15,839 E-rate Internet connection	Holy Child Middle School.....\$31,218 E-rate Internet connection
Our Lady of Sorrow School.....\$49,392 E-rate Internet connection	St. Brigid School.....\$47,762 E-rate Internet connection
Nativity Mission School.....\$48,392 E-rate Internet connection	Fund for the City of New York.....\$750,000 Supports community prosecution programs